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Factionalism

---THE ENEMY OF THE AUTO WORKERS

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THE REMARKABLE progress of the United Automobile Workers of America, a CIO affiliate, is now generally known to the labor movement of the country. Over a year and a half ago, through its sweeping organizational campaign and the great sit-down strikes, this union, with the active support of the CIO, entrenched itself in practically all the big shops of the industry and improved wages and working conditions, in what was formerly the citadel of the open shop. Ford remained unorganized but a campaign to enroll the Ford workers is now in progress.

The automobile industry is a young industry, in the composition of the union it has predominantly young and militant people. The teeming activity of this organization has brought forth promising labor leaders from among the rank and file, not only for the auto workers but for the entire American working class. Its militant struggles and firm stand in behalf of unionism in the CIO has won the admiration of the workers and progressives throughout the country. Because of its militancy it has gained the respect of the owners of the industry and in the present situation of big unemployment and of the large-scale offensive of the employers, it has succeeded by and large in beating back the attacks upon wages and the attempt to worsen conditions.

But this excellent record of the UAWA is marred by a bitter factional struggle that has been going on for over a year, which has divided this union into two separate camps. This factional struggle has been the subject of many newspaper articles and many items in the capitalist press which has lambasted the UAWA as an irresponsible organization. The very purpose of the articles has been to further stimulate the factional warfare seeking to discredit not only this outpost of the CIO, but the CIO itself.

CONVENTION DECISIONS CITED

THE two factional groups within the UAWA are known under the name of the "Progressive" and "Unity" caucuses. These names are supposed to indicate the basic trends of these groups. The groups arose shortly before the Milwaukee Convention. The Unity group obtained its name because of its efforts to achieve one slate of candidates, one common program and keep the organization united. The Progressive group adopted its name in order to distinguish it from the Unity group. There were undoubtedly differences between the two groups but at the time they were not basic enough to divide the organization into two camps. The legalization of the caucus at the Convention (the rejection of a resolution to abolish factions) served to perpetuate the groups. And the factional struggle and feeling were intensified as time went on notwithstanding the fact that there was a strong desire on the part of the rank and file to unify the organization, a sentiment which found expression at the convention itself in the applause and enthusiasm which greeted every effort and every pledge for unity.

Where factions exist all events and activities are interpreted in the light of factional considerations. The Unity group has charged the Progressives with tending to give way to the manufacturers in the drive against the union and failing to put up a stubborn resistance. They have also charged the Progressive group leaders with violating the democratic rights of the membership and of unduly interfering with local autonomy and of making appointments to offices chiefly from among their factional adherents. On the other hand the Progressives have accused the Unity group of violating the discipline of the union and of an unwillingness to subordinate themselves to the deci-

ions of the International Executive Board which is dominated by the Progressives.

They have also accused the Unity group of stimulating unauthorized strike action. There is no doubt that in the case of General Motors Progressive leaders, influenced chiefly by the arguments of the handful of Lovestoneites who occupy positions of leadership only through appointive posts, did make an unnecessary retreat and gave up some of the gains achieved in the last period. There is no doubt that the administration has violated the democratic rights of the membership in many instances. And while the Unity group has never supported a policy of unauthorized strikes, adherents of the Unity group have been guilty of allowing themselves to be provoked by the manufacturers. But it would be a serious mistake to regard the Progressive group as one reactionary mass.

Locals under Progressive leadership and the rank and file that followed Progressives have time and again demonstrated their adherence to the principles of the CIO and locals under Progressive leadership have condemned the surrender tactics connected with the General Motors agreement. The fact of the matter is that the groupings never have been and dare not today homogeneous and united with one set of policies. In both these groups there are and have been differences of opinion and divisions and yet these groups maintain themselves as organizational units within the union.

STANDS ON VARIOUS ISSUES

IN THE Progressive groups there are differences of opinion on the question of Labor's Non-Partisan League and the mobilization of the people of Michigan in behalf of Roosevelt's New Deal Program and the re-election of Gov. F. Murphy. There is a good section of the Progres-

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sives who squarely stand behind Labor's Non-Partisan League and for the re-election of Gov. Murphy. There is a section around a handful of Lovestoneites who are really apposed to Labor's Non-Partisan League. If these differences have not yet come to the surface in very sharp form it is chiefly due to the fact that they are being stifled because of factional considerations.

The same is true of the Unity group. An overwhelming majority of the Unity group are for Labor's Non-Partisan League. There are some, however, who follow the sectarian line of the Socialists, who are against Labor's Non-Partisan League and against the re-election of Gov. Murphy. On the question of the struggle for peace there are also differences of opinion. In both groups there are supporters for a genuine peace policy, that is for collective security and there are also people who stand for isolation and neutrality which is very harmful in the struggle for peace. The position also of most of the locals whether under Progressive or Unity leadership favors democratic policies and procedures. And on the whole the membership resents any violation of democratic rights and while Progressive leadership has sinned more often on this question, nonetheless of late even some of the Unity supporters, because of the requirements of the factional struggle have violated democratic rights, as for example recently the supporters of the Unity group, the president of the Briggs Local took it upon himself to appoint the whole delegation to the Michigan State Convention of the CIO which was also done by a number of Progressive locals.

WHO AIDS FACTIONS?

THE FACT of the matter is that factional groupings are taking on more and more an artificial character. And that within both

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groupings there is a strong desire for the maintenance of democratic procedure and militant policies. And that if the factional groupings were wiped out it would not be difficult for harmonious cooperation to be established among the rank and file and also among the largest part of the leadership to carry through the militant policies of the CIO. But the danger exists that with the preservation of factions, reactionary and destructive elements are able to exert influence upon the policies of the union and their activities are overlooked because of factional protection. It is therefore clear that the factional divisions within the organization are the main barrier to the getting together of all militant constructive forces within the International. It is also clear that the present factional groupings are degenerating into unprincipled alliances and that the perpetuation of factions threatens to develop into unprincipled scramble for office.

Who stands in the way of abolition of factions? In the first place the Lovestoneites. A handful of people who are able to wield positions of influence only because they are close to the President of the International and have received appointive posts. This group, which has no mass following and whose policies are harmful to the organization need factions and factional protection. This was the group which stood in the way before the Milwaukee Convention. This group proclaims the freedom of factions as good unionism.

They fear that the elimination of factions which would give the membership power to freely decide upon policies and officers would weaken the position of this group. That is why they conduct factional intrigue, whip up factional bitterness and keep the organization in a state of factional fever. They are not concerned with the welfare of the union, they are concerned only with the welfare

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of their group and factional adherence. This group serves as the brain-trust for all reactionary elements for anti-union elements who understand full well the harmfulness of factionalism and will strive often at the behest of the manufacturers to maintain the present disunity. This group spreads propaganda against all and sundry who try to curb and wipe out the factional struggle. They argue that anyone who criticizes is guilty of indiscipline and that anyone who objects to their factional conduct is acting against the best interests of the majority.

THE DANGERS CITED

BUT OF late a number of Socialists who have been following in general a policy of unification have been listening to the arguments and factional thinking of the Lovestoneites and have fallen victims themselves to a policy which is in conflict with the program and purpose of the Unity group. They too believe that a Union cannot get along without factions. They argue against the abolition of factionalism on the grounds that the democratic procedure of the union is facilitated by the existence of factions. And now that they are confronted with the very program which they advocated, the abolition of factions, they take the demagogic position that factions cannot be wiped out until the causes of factionalism have been eliminated. They put the cart before the horse.

Everyone knows that if factions were abolished, three-quarters of the reasons for conflict and undemocratic procedure would be eliminated. If the arguments that factions cannot be abolished until the causes are eliminated were true then factionalism would never be wiped out of the organization. Needless to say the wiping out of factionalism cannot be made only upon the

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basis of decree, there must be a program to meet the present needs of the union and there must be guarantees of democratic procedure. But if the will to wipe out factionalism were present it would not at all be difficult to get the overwhelming mass of the membership to support a program for the elimination of factionalism.

What does the argument that factions cannot be wiped out until the causes have been eliminated lead to in practice? According to this argument any group of people since they have a legal right to form a faction in the organization under the present system can organize caucuses and factions for good or bad reasons or no reasons at all. Who is to say whether the cause which leads to the formation of a faction is justified? Who can deny under the present system the right to any group to form a faction, say in a local union because they do not like the leadership and to maintain their factions as long as that leadership exists on the grounds "that factions cannot be wiped out until the cause of factionalism has been eliminated." On this basis it is easy to conceive how a union can be split into all kinds of groups and factions and how any anti-union elements can get together and legally maintain a grouping against the union for reasons known only to themselves. The Socialists argue that the continuation of factionalism is necessary for democratic procedure. But the very opposite is true.

BROPHY'S STATEMENT

F ACTIONS STIFLE democratic procedure because matters are decided outside of regular channels of the union, in group meetings and are decided not on the basis of a democratic discussion but because of factional loyalties and adherence. Where democratic pro-

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cedure prevails then there is the greatest degree of participation of the rank and file and matters are settled without conflict which is the case of practically all the unions of the CIO except the UAWA. If the argument of the Socialists were correct then the CIO unions which are democratic organizations should be the scene of factional conflict.

The need for the abolition of factionalism has been emphasized repeatedly by leading spokesmen of the CIO. At the recent Lansing Convention of the CIO its leaders condemned in unmistakable terms the factional fight which has been going on in the organization. John Brophy, National Director of the CIO stated:

"An officer, either national or local, who lends himself to factionalism is misusing his position and doing a disservice to the auto workers.

"The rank and file of all CIO affiliates are loyal to the principles of the CIO, in spite of the fact that some who are here conducted themselves in an obstructive manner. If we don't get cooperation here for a strong CIO in Michigan, we will get it from the rank and file. I know the rank and file of the auto workers want unity and progress, not bickering and confusion.

"This exhibition of factionalism only lends comfort to Ford and all the enemies of organized labor.

"End this petty, miserable factionalism which is sapping the strength of your union. I am today voicing the wishes of John L. Lewis when I call upon you to consolidate your forces and learn to work together. Lewis wants a united auto workers union."—("The CIO News," Washington, D. C., April 30, 1938.)

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Likewise spoke President Michael Quill of the Transport Workers Union, condemning factionalism, and rapped red-baiting, declaring:

"One section of the people who raise red-scares can't see farther than their noses, and are fools," the other section are stool-pigeons who try to break unions."—("The CIO News," Washington, D. C., April 30, 1938.)

FRANKENSTEEN'S STAND

THESE statements of the CIO were enthusiastically greeted by the delegates assembled. This indicates clearly that the rank and file unmistakably opposes factionalism and is willing to give assistance and support toward smashing and eliminating the factional line-ups. Unfortunately, however, the official organ of the UAWA, edited by the Lovestoneite, Munger, in the Saturday issue of April 30th, thought otherwise and quite openly disapproved the statement of the CIO leaders attacking them in the following words: "It is regrettable that some guest speakers from the CIO felt it necessary to meddle in the internal affairs of the automobile workers union." This statement which is the first pronouncement against the CIO should alarm the entire membership. The U. A. W. A. from its very inception was, is and remains loyal to the CIO and such attacks indicate to what extent the Lovestonites, out of factional interests, are damaging the U. A. W. and its membership and giving aid and comfort to the reactionaries of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L.

That the time has come for the wiping out of factions has been clearly evidenced by the stand recently taken by Richard T. Frankensteen, International Vice-President who, according to statements appearing in the press, has

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advanced the program for the abolition of factionalism on the basis of adherence "to endorsement and vigorous application of the C. I. O., the organization of the unorganized, active support for the holding of the CIO convention" and a program of progressive activity for the union, including an internal program which calls for the prohibition of factional groupings while safeguarding the democratic rights of the membership. There is no doubt that if this program is made known to the membership that it will find a hearty response there and that such a program backed up by the will of the officers to honestly put it into effect can unify the entire membership in behalf of the CIO policies.

It is to be hoped that this program will be supported by the entire International Executive Board and by the leaders of the local unions. There is reason to believe that it will meet with some resistance because the recent meeting of the CIO Convention in Lansing which formed the Michigan State Industrial Council of the CIO evidenced the extent to which factionalism is driving some elements in both caucuses. One cannot hide the fact that factionalists in both groups attempt to transplant the factional struggle of the UAW into the CIO meeting and that attempts were made to elect factional leaders as the heads of the State CIO, thereby endangering the organizational unity not only of the auto workers but of the other unions as well. It was indeed fortunate that the will of unity made itself strongly felt at this Convention and that the efforts to elect factional leaders as the head of the CIO was not carried through although a factional battle took place around the election of the secretary and the Executive Board. This policy against factionalism was not

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to the liking of some reactionary delegates from the Progressive group, chiefly from Flint, who voiced their protests by leaving the Convention, nor to the liking of some delegates of the Unity group, who, influenced by some Socialists, likewise left the Convention although it was already toward the very end.

WHERE COMMUNISTS STAND

THE COMMUNIST Party which has played no small part in the building up of the UAW and which counts among its ranks some first rate organizers that have done very substantial work in the building of the union has always been and is at the present time for an end of the factional struggle. If it has given support to the Unity group it did so only out of consideration that this group stood for the abolition of factionalism. But the Communist Party has never been committed to any group and any group struggle but has always regarded the interest of the union as a whole as its first consideration. If at times the attitude adopted by the Communist Party members seemed factional in nature this was not the policy of the Communist Party but rather a departure from it. Such distortions of policy have been criticized by the Central Committee which has insisted that all Communists in all their work serve only the interests of the union as a whole.

At the Lansing Convention of the CIO, Communists were chiefly concerned with the unification of the organization and not with transplanting the factional fight into the family of CIO unions. The Communist Party was vitally interested that there be no factional commitments on the part of any of its members toward the Unity group which be in conflict with the interests of the CIO. There is no doubt that

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Communists were helpful in having that Convention take steps which would keep the CIO organization above the factional divisions of the UAW. The Communists are of the opinion that the great body of leaders within the UAW are constructive and that it is necessary for them to get together by eliminating factions and work for the best interests of the union.

We Communists are not interested in pushing forward any factional grouping and achieving any factional control either for union groupings or for the Communists themselves. We demand only the right to collaborate and work with all sincere forces of the labor movement who base themselves on the program of the CIO. Where in the past in the State of Michigan our Party pursued too narrow a line it has been critical of itself and has made efforts to change it. It is necessary to say now that such a narrow policy was never correct and is absolutely wrong today. We have no special interest for any special group.

There are some that would like to place the Communist Party as being a faction and on that grounds to argue that it is impossible to abolish factions as long as there are members belonging to political groupings within the union. But let it be distinctly understood that while the Communist Party as part of the labor movement discusses questions of policies pertaining to the unions, it does not organize its ranks to put over its policies through any concerted or factional methods. The Communist Party members subscribe to, recognize and abide by the decisions of the union and at the last meeting of the Central Committee it has distinctly forbidden its membership to organize fractions or to act as a group within the unions of the CIO.

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This Policy will be strictly enforced and the Communists will not give any cause for the organization of any factions in order to insure that the free discussion of the membership of the union will not be interfered with from without. We have complete confidence that on the basis of a democratic discussion and the operation of the democratic channels of the union that the progressive policies of the UAW will be maintained and that the line of policy of the CIO will prevail in the organization. We feel that the smashing of factionalism will only accelerate this process. We have confidence that the UAW, which has so splendid a record in the labor movement will succeed in wiping out the factional line-up and will march toward new gains and make further advances in keeping with the whole of progressive America towards the goal of broadening democracy, of maintaining peace and of winning jobs and security for all.

Answering the Tory Lies Against the UAW

FOR THE last few days, the anti-labor drive of the Tory press has been featured by an uncommon number of lies and slanders against the United Automobile Workers of America, a CIO union.

In the midst of these clouds of confusion, it is absolutely essential that the members of the UAWA, labor generally—and all progressives—should be equipped with the true facts.

We print elsewhere in this issue an article entitled "Factionalism, the Enemy of the Auto Workers," which gives a basic explanation of the situation within the UAWA and the all-important issues which confront it. The article is written by William Weinstone and William

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Gebert, both members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Party leaders in Detroit.

The false "dope" stories in the reactionary press—including the copyrighted dispatches of the Associated and United Press agencies—would make it appear that the issue within the UAWA is one of "personalities," of "who shall oust whom."

Weinstone and Gebert point out that there are differences in the UAWA—but they are not the superficial differences of "personality clashes."

They show that the real issues before the union are: Carrying forward its drive against the open shop empire of Henry Ford; consolidating and uniting its ranks against factionalism; and against the poisonous Lovestoneites and the necessity of becoming a powerful factor for progress in the Congressional elections and for the re-election of Gov. Murphy.

On one side are lined up the Fords, the General Motors barons and their wrecking Lovestoneite stooges, who would destroy the UAWA and organized labor. On the other side are lined up all progressives in the UAWA, including the Communists, who are fighting for a united, strengthened and progressive union capable of defeating the reactionaries in the factories and at the polls.

The distortions and lies of the capitalist press—collaborating with the Lovestoneites—are designed to smash the UAWA, the CIO—and eventually the labor movement, including the A. F. of L. The article of Gebert and Weinstone clears the air, and is a valuable contribution to the further growth of the UAWA democracy and progress.

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